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OCI NO. 4079  
COPY NO. 10

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
8 April 1954

PRE-GENEVA CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS - IX

Further Soviet strategy at Geneva indicated: The Soviet note of 5 April on administrative arrangements for the Geneva conference again demonstrated Moscow's preoccupation with promoting Communist China's claims to great power status. The communication denied that the conference will not be a "Big Five" meeting, asserting that the fact that only the five powers "will participate on both the Korean and Indochina questions" proves that Peiping will take part "on an equal basis with the other great powers."

The note, which also proposed that Chinese should be one of the official languages "during the whole conference," may foreshadow Soviet demands for including China in negotiations on the composition and scope of the Indochina phase of the talks.

The endorsement by both Pravda and Izvestia of a resolution passed by the recent Vienna session of the Bureau of the World Peace Council (WPC), stating that an immediate truce in Indochina would pave the way for negotiations between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, may presage Communist tactics at the parley aimed at forcing France to open truce talks with the Viet Minh, and in effect, to extend de facto recognition to Ho Chi Minh's regime. The WPC Bureau's resolution also suggests that the Communists will propose an Asian security plan similar to Molotov's "All-European collective security system" at Berlin. Izvestia commented on 6 April that the five great powers, meeting for the first time at Geneva with other interested states, "must reach an agreement on general security in the Far East."

Communist reactions to Dulles' "united action" speech: Peiping Radio has termed Secretary Dulles' 29 March call for "united action" to prevent Communist conquest of Indochina an attempt to forestall any positive results at Geneva, and to coerce America's allies into following a policy of increasing international tension. Broadcasts assert that the answer to "united action" has "already been given in the Korean war." Those assertions may be a warning that Communist China would counter greater American aid to the Franco-Vietnamese forces

State Dept. review completed

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Document No. <u>9</u>	
No Change In Class. <input type="checkbox"/>	25X1
<input type="checkbox"/> Declassified	
Class. Changed To: TS S <u>0</u>	
Date: <u>27 July 78</u>	

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or "internationalization" of the war with increased assistance to the Viet Minh. The warning may also be designed to make the French more susceptible to Communist proposals at Geneva or to a pre-Geneva cease-fire offer.

Moscow has given slight attention to the speech although New Times thought it foreshadowed Chinese Nationalist participation in the war inasmuch as the United States is "least of all disposed" to commit its own forces.

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France wants Geneva participants held to a minimum: In a meeting with American and British representatives, a French Foreign Office spokesman stated that Foreign Minister Bidault hopes that the number of participants at the Geneva conference can be held to the absolute minimum. The French reportedly feel that Thailand and Burma could be included, but would prefer not to have Australia invited since this would open the way for Indonesia and others. The French representative further indicated France's opposition to any United Nations observer being present for the Indochina phase of the conference.

The British Foreign Office representative stated his government's belief that the Associated States should be full participants. He felt that inviting the Associated States on an ad hoc basis as France has suggested might reflect on their sovereignty.

South Korea terms American assurances against neutral participation "valueless": Apparently encouraged by recent United States press criticisms of the Geneva conference, Foreign Minister Pyun on 3 April approached Ambassador Briggs on the question of neutral participation. He declared that although technically neutrals might not be present for the negotiations

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on Korea, they would nevertheless be present for the Indochina discussions; and that American assurances to Seoul that no neutrals would participate were thus "without value."

Pyun again complained about simultaneous discussions on Korea and Indochina, but concluded by stating that South Korea's official position on attending would probably be clarified "within a few days."

It is expected that South Korea will probably participate, but with "reiterated pessimism and dark forebodings."

Australia desires to participate in Indochina talks: The Australian minister in Saigon told Ambassador Heath on 5 April that his government intends to request an invitation to the Indochina phase of the Geneva talks. He said Australia has already included in its delegation to the parley its former chargé at Saigon, an expert on Indochina.

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